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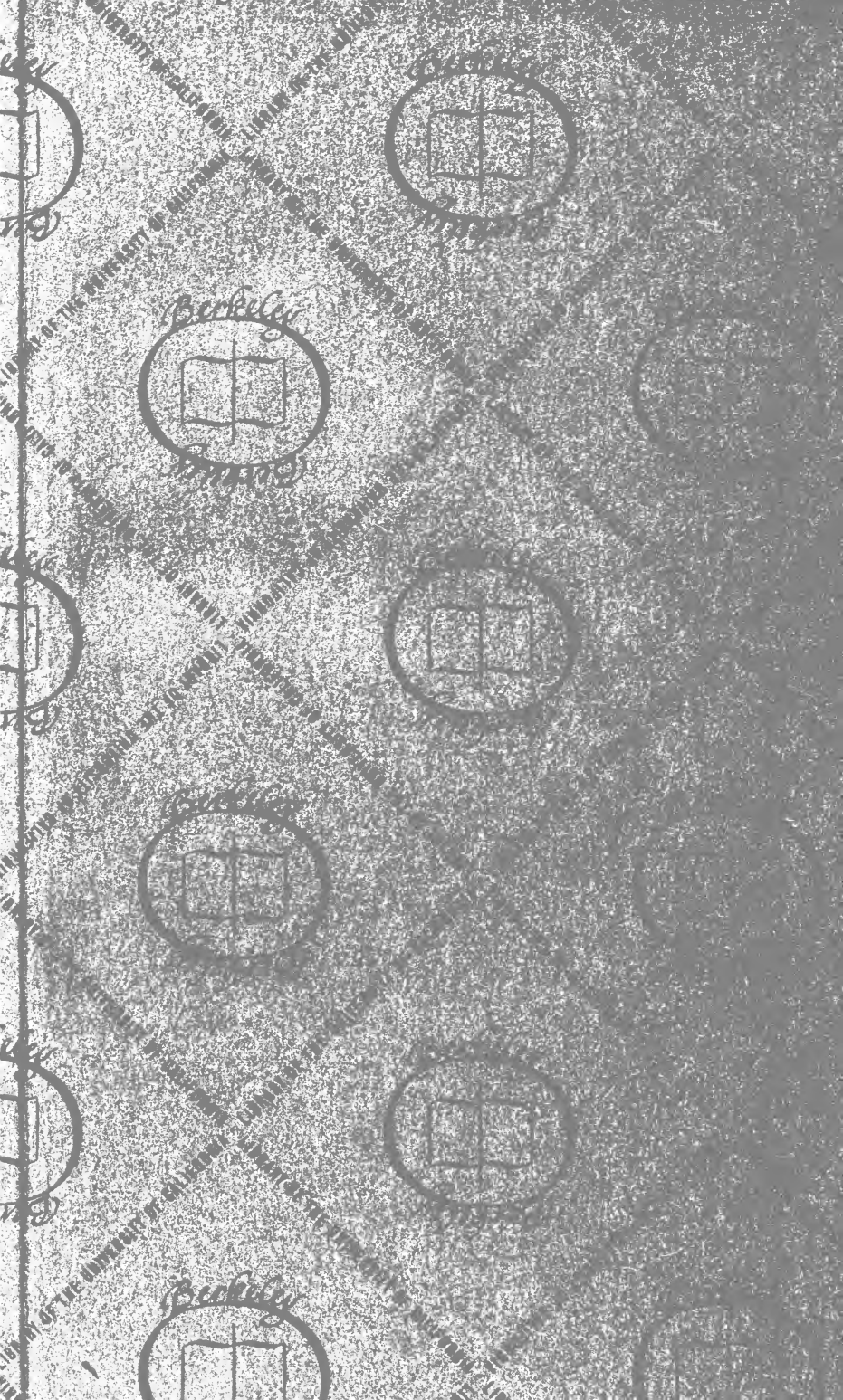


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*Walt Whitman: Yesterday & Today*



# WALT WHITMAN

## *Yesterday & Today*

BY

HENRY EDUARD LEGLER



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1916

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TO THE

AMERICAN

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TO DR. MAX HENIUS

CONSISTENT HATER OF SHAMS  
ARDENT LOVER OF ALL OUTDOORS  
AND GENEROUS GIVER OF SELF  
IN GENUINE FELLOWSHIP

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

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*Walt Whitman: Yesterday & Today*





ON a day about mid-year in 1855, the conventional literary world was startled into indecorous behavior by the unannounced appearance of a thin quarto sheaf of poems, in form and in tone unlike anything of precedent issue. It was called *Leaves of Grass*, and there were but twelve poems in the volume. No author's name appeared upon the title page, the separate poems bore no captions, there was no imprint of publisher. A steel engraving of a man presumably between thirty and forty years of age, coatless, shirt flaringly open at the neck, and a copyright notice identifying Walter Whitman with the publication, furnished the only clues. Uncouth in size, atrociously printed, and shockingly frank in the language employed, the volume evoked such a tirade of rancorous condemnation as perhaps bears no parallel in the history of letters. From contemporary criticisms might be compiled an *Anthology of Anathema* comparable to Wagner's *Schimpf-Lexicon*, or the *Dictionary of Abuse* suggested by William Archer for Henrik Ibsen. Some of the striking adjectives and phrases employed in print would include the following, as applied either to the verses or their author:

The slop-bucket of Walt Whitman.

A belief in the preciousness of filth.

Entirely bestial.

Nastiness and animal insensibility to shame.

Noxious weeds.

Impious and obscene.

Disgusting burlesque.

Broken out of Bedlam.

Libidinousness and swell of self-applause.

Defilement.

Crazy outbreak of conceit and vulgarity.

Ithyphallic audacity.

Gross indecency.

Sunken sensualist.

Rotten garbage of licentious thoughts.

Roots like a pig.

Rowdy Knight Errant.

A poet whose indecencies stink in the nostrils.

Its liberty is the wildest license; its love the essence  
of the lowest lust!

Priapus—worshipping obscenity.

Rant and rubbish.

Linguistic silliness.

Inhumanly insolent.

Apotheosis of Sweat.

Mouthings of a mountebank.

Venomously malignant.

Pretentious twaddle.

Degraded helot of literature.

His work, like a maniac's robe, bedizened with fluttering tags of a thousand colors.

Roaming, like a drunken satyr, with inflamed blood, through every field of lascivious thought.

Muck of abomination.

A few quotations from the press of this period will serve to indicate the general tenor of comment:

"The book might pass for merely hectoring and ludicrous, if it were not something a great deal more offensive," observed the *Christian Examiner* (Boston, 1856). "It openly deifies the bodily organs, senses, and appetites in terms that admit of no double sense. The author is 'one of the roughs, a Kosmos, disorderly, fleshly, sensual, divine inside and out. The scent of these armpits an aroma finer than prayer.' He leaves 'washes and razors for foofoos,' thinks the talk about virtue and vice only 'blurt,' he being above and indifferent to both of them. These quotations are made with cautious delicacy. We pick our way as cleanly as we can between other passages which are more detestable."

In columns of bantering comment, after parodying his style of all-inclusiveness, the *United States Review* (1855) characterizes Walt Whitman thus: "No skulker or tea-drinking poet is Walt Whitman. He will bring poems to fill the days and nights—fit for men and

women with the attributes of throbbing blood and flesh. The body, he teaches, is beautiful. Sex is also beautiful. Are you to be put down, he seems to ask, to that shallow level of literature and conversation that stops a man's recognizing the delicious pleasure of his sex, or a woman hers? Nature he proclaims inherently clean. Sex will not be put aside; it is the great ordination of the universe. He works the muscle of the male and the teeming fibre of the female throughout his writings, as wholesome realities, impure only by deliberate intention and effort. To men and women, he says, you can have healthy and powerful breeds of children on no less terms than these of mine. Follow me, and there shall be taller and richer crops of humanity on the earth."

From *Studies among the Leaves*, printed in the Crayon (New York, 1856), this extract may be taken: "With a wonderful vigor of thought and intensity of perception, a power, indeed, not often found, *Leaves of Grass* has no identity, no concentration, no purpose—it is barbarous, undisciplined, like the poetry of a half-civilized people, and as a whole useless, save to those miners of thought who prefer the metal in its unworked state."

The *New York Daily Times* (1856) asks: "What Centaur have we here, half man, half beast, neighing defiance to all the world? What conglomerate of thought is this before us, with insolence, philosophy,

tenderness, blasphemy, beauty, and gross indecency tumbling in drunken confusion through the pages? Who is this arrogant young man who proclaims himself the Poet of the time, and who roots like a pig among a rotten garbage of licentious thoughts?"

"Other poets," notes a writer in the Brooklyn Daily Eagle (1856), "other poets celebrate great events, personages, romances, wars, loves, passions, the victories and power of their country, or some real or imagined incident—and polish their work, and come to conclusions, and satisfy the reader. This poet celebrates natural propensities in himself; and that is the way he celebrates all. He comes to no conclusions, and does not satisfy the reader. He certainly leaves him what the serpent left the woman and the man, the taste of the Paradise tree of the knowledge of good and evil, never to be erased again."

"He stalks among the dapper gentlemen of this generation like a drunken Hercules amid the dainty dancers," suggested the Christian Spiritualist (1856). "The book abounds in passages that cannot be quoted in drawing rooms, and expressions that fall upon ears polite with a terrible dissonance."

Nor was savage criticism in the years 1855 and 1856 limited to this side of the Atlantic. The London Critic, in a caustic review, found this the mildest comment that Whitman's verse warranted: "Walt Whitman

gives us slang in the place of melody, and rowdyism in the place of regularity. \* \* \* Walt Whitman libels the highest type of humanity, and calls his free speech the true utterance of a man; we who may have been misdirected by civilization, call it the expression of a beast."

Noisy as was this babel of discordant voices, one friendly greeting rang clear. Leaves of Grass had but just come from the press, when Ralph Waldo Emerson, from his home in Concord, under date of July 21, 1855, wrote to the author in genuine fellowship:

"I give you joy of your free and brave thought. I have great joy in it. I find incomparable things said incomparably well, as they must be. I find the courage of treatment which so delights us, and which large perception only can inspire.

"I greet you at the beginning of a great career, which yet must have had a long foreground somewhere, for such a start. I rubbed my eyes a little to see if this sunbeam were no illusion; but the solid sense of the book is a sober certainty. It has the best merits, namely, of fortifying and encouraging."

Tracing the popular estimates of Walt Whitman through the next five years, expressions of unmeasured disapproval similar to those quoted may be found in periodicals and in the daily press, with here and there grudging admission that despite unseemly tendencies,

there is evident originality and even genius in the pages of this unusual book. In a comparatively temperate review, August 4, 1860, the *Cosmopolite*, of Boston, while deploring that nature is treated here without fig-leaves, declares the style wonderfully idiomatic and graphic, adding: "In his frenzy, in the fire of his inspiration, are fused and poured out together elements hitherto considered antagonistic in poetry—passion, arrogance, animality, philosophy, brag, humility, rowdyism, spirituality, laughter, tears, together with the most ardent and tender love, the most comprehensive human sympathy which ever radiated its divine glow through the pages of poems."

A contemporary of this date, the *Boston Post*, found nothing to commend. "Grass," said the writer, making the title of the book his text, "grass is the gift of God for the healthy sustenance of his creatures, and its name ought not to be desecrated by being so improperly bestowed upon these foul and rank leaves of the poison-plants of egotism, irreverance, and of lust, run rampant and holding high revel in its shame."

And the *London Lancet*, July 7, 1860, comments in this wise: "Of all the writers we have ever perused, Walt Whitman is the most silly, the most blasphemous, and the most disgusting. If we can think of any stronger epithets, we will print them in a second edition."





## II

**W**HAT were these poems which excited such vitriolic epithets? Taking both the editions of 1855 and of the year following, and indeed including all of the four hundred poems bearing Whitman's authorship in the three-quarters of a half-century during which his final volume was in the making, scarcely half a dozen poems can be found which could give offense to the most prudish persons. Nearly all of these have been grouped, with some others, under the general sub-title *Children of Adam*. There are poems which excite the risibles of some readers, there are poems which read like the lists of a mail-order house, and others which appear in spots to have been copied bodily from a gazetteer. These, however, are more likely to provoke good-natured banter than violent denunciatory passion. Even Ralph Waldo Emerson, whose generous greeting and meed of praise in the birth-year of *Leaves of Grass* will be recalled, in sending a copy of it to Carlyle in 1860, and commending it to his interest, added: "And after you have looked into it, if you think, as you may, that it is only an auctioneer's inventory of a warehouse, you can light your pipe with it."

Had Whitman omitted the few poems whose titles are given here, doubtless a few readers would have found his formless verses either curious or ludicrous, or merely stupid, and others would have passed them by as unmeriting even casual attention. The poems which are chiefly responsible for a controversy which raged for half a century, are these:

I sing the body electric.

A woman waits for me.

To a common prostitute.

The dalliance of the eagles.

Wholly dissociated from the picturesque personality from which the book emanated, *Leaves of Grass* bears a unique story margined on its pages. The sprawling types whose muddy imprint on the ill-proportioned pages made up the uncouth first edition of the book, were put together by the author's hands, and the sorry press work was his handiwork as well. The unusual preface and the twelve poems that followed he wrote in the open, while lounging on the wharves, while crossing on ferry-boats, while loitering in the fields, while sitting on the tops of omnibuses. His physical materials were the stubs of pencils, the backs of used envelopes, scraps of paper that easily came to hand. The same open-air workshops and like crude tools of writing he utilized for nearly forty years. During the thirty-seven years that intervened between the first printing of his

Leaves and his death in 1892, he followed as his chief purpose in life the task he had set himself at the beginning of his serious authorship—the cumulative expression of personality in the larger sense which is manifest in the successive and expanding editions of his *Leaves of Grass*. That book becomes therefore, a life history. Incompletely as he may have performed this self-imposed task, his own explanation of his purpose may well be accepted as made in good faith. That explanation appears in the preface to the 1876 edition, and amid the multitude of paper scraps that came into the possession of his executors, following his passing away, may be found similar clues:

“It was originally my intention, after chanting in *Leaves of Grass* the songs of the body and of existence, to then compose a further, equally-needed volume, based on those convictions of perpetuity and conservation which, enveloping all precedents, make the unseen soul govern absolutely at last. I meant, while in a sort continuing the theme of my first chants, to shift the slides and exhibit the problem and paradox of the same ardent and fully appointed personality entering the sphere of the resistless gravitation of spiritual law, and with cheerful face estimating death, not at all as the cessation, but as somehow what I feel it must be, the entrance upon by far the greater part of existence, and something that life is at least as much for, as it is for itself.”

Too long for repetition here, but important in the same connection for a full understanding of Walt Whitman's motives, is that Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads, wherein he summed up his work in fourteen pages of prose, and with frank egotism appended this anecdote in a footnote on the first page thereof: "When Champollion, on his death bed, handed to the printer the revised proof of his Egyptian Grammar, he said gayly, 'Be careful of this—it is my *carte de visite* to posterity.'"

Undaunted when ridicule poured over him, evenly tranquil when abuse assailed him, unemotional when praise was lavished upon him, unfalteringly and un-deviatingly he pursued his way. The group headings which were added in successive editions of his book, indicate the milestones of his journey from the time when the Song of Myself noted the beginning, till Whispers of Heavenly Death presaged the ending. Familiarity with the main incidents and experiences of his life give to the several annexes, as he was fond of calling the additions that he made to each succeeding issue of his Leaves, the clues of chapter headings: Children of Adam; Calamus; Birds of Passage; Sea-Drift; By the Roadside; Drum-Taps; Autumn Rivulets; Whispers of Heavenly Death; Songs of Parting.

A check list of his principal editions of Leaves of Grass, with characteristics noted, would serve almost as a chronology of Whitman's life story.

1855—FIRST EDITION. Twelve poems were included in this edition. They are without distinctive titles, though in later issues they appeared with varying titles, those given in the definitive edition being the following:

Song of myself.

Song for occupations.

To think of time.

The sleepers.

I sing the body electric.

Faces.

Song of the answerer.

Europe.

A Boston ballad.

There was a child went forth.

My lesson complete.

Great are the myths.

1856—SECOND EDITION. In this edition, the second, there are thirty-two poems. The poems are given titles, but not the same ones that were finally included.

1860—THIRD EDITION. The number of poems is one hundred and fifty-seven.

1867—FOURTH EDITION. The poems have grown in number to two hundred and thirty-six. The inclusion here of the war cluster Drum-Taps, and a rearrangement of other clusters, marks this edition as a notable one. Drum-Taps had appeared as a separate volume two years earlier.

1871—FIFTH EDITION. A total of two hundred and seventy-three poems are here classified under general titles, including for the first time, *Passage to India*, and *After All Not to Create Only*, groups which prior to this date were issued separately.

1876—SIXTH EDITION. This issue was intended as a Centennial edition, and it includes *Two Rivulets*; there are two hundred and ninety-eight poems.

1881—SEVENTH EDITION. Intended as the completion of a design extending over a period of twenty-six years, Whitman had undertaken an extensive revision of what he termed his bible of democracy. There are three hundred and eighteen poems. This is the edition abandoned by the publishers because threatened with prosecution by the district attorney.

1889—EIGHTH EDITION. In celebration of the author's seventieth birthday, a special autograph edition of three hundred copies was issued.

1892—NINTH EDITION. Whitman supervised the make-up of this issue during his last illness.

1897—TENTH EDITION. Here appeared for the first time, *Old Age Echoes*, numbering thirteen poems.

1902—ELEVENTH AND DEFINITIVE EDITION. Issued by the literary executors of Walt Whitman—Horace L. Traubel, Richard Maurice Bucke, and Thomas B. Harned.

There have been six editions of Whitman's complete

writings, and numerous selections from *Leaves of Grass* have been published under the editorship of well-known literary men—among them, William M. Rossetti, Ernest Rhys, W. T. Stead, and Oscar L. Triggs. There have been translations into German, French, Italian, Russian, and several Asiatic languages.

“I had my choice when I commenc’d,” he notes in his *Backward Glance* of 1880; “I bid neither for soft eulogies, big money returns, nor the approbation of existing schools and conventions. . . . . .Unstopp’d and unwarp’d by any influence outside the soul within me, I have had my say entirely my own way, and put it unerringly on record—the value thereof to be decided by time.”





### III

WITH the war-time period came the turning point in the popular estimate of Walt Whitman. No doubt, too, his experiences during this time of stress and storm influenced the rest of his career as a man and as a writer. His service as a volunteer nurse in camp and in hospital gave him a sympathetic insight and a patriotic outlook tempered with gentleness which are reflected in his poetry of this period, published under the title *Drum-Taps*. His well-known song of sorrow, *O Captain, My Captain*, is a threnody poignant with genuine feeling. It has, more than any others of his verses, lyric rather than plangent quality. When *Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed*, and *The Sobbing of the Bells* are other poems belonging to this distinctive group. It is notable that in his lament over the death of Lincoln, Whitman gives rhyme as well as rhythm to the verses.

This was a time of triumph for Whitman in a literary sense. In Germany, the poet Ferdinand Freiligrath contributed to the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, Augsburg, May 10, 1868, a long article in praise of his work. In England, his poetry attracted the attention of the

Rossettis, Tennyson, John Addington Symonds. Mrs. Anne Gilchrist defended him from the aspersions cast upon his references to womanhood. A sympathetic and friendly tone began to displace the collection of distasteful adjectives which had been his meed heretofore.

Then, in the latter part of 1865, occurred an episode which drew around Whitman a circle of friends keen to resent, and active to condemn, an act of injustice from one high in authority. Among the influential friends who rushed to his defense were John Burroughs and William Douglas O'Connor, and the events which drew their fire were these:

Whitman, whose health was shattered by his untiring devotion and ministrations to ill and wounded soldiers, had been given a minor clerkship in the Department of the Interior. James Harlan was Secretary of the Department. He had been a Methodist clergyman and president of a western college. When his attention was called to Whitman's authorship of *Leaves of Grass*, the Secretary characterized the book as "full of indecent passages," the author was termed "a very bad man," and was abruptly dismissed from the position he had held for six months.

Whitman meekly accepted the curt dismissal, but William Douglas O'Connor in a white heat of indignation issued a pamphlet which flayed the astonished Secretary

of the Interior as a narrow-minded calumniator. The pamphlet, now a very rare document, was headed:

## THE GOOD GRAY POET

### A VINDICATION

With Celtic fervor and eloquence, William Douglas O'Connor made his plea an intercession in the cause of free letters. He examined the entire range of literature, ancient and modern, in quest of parallels that would prove Whitman's book by comparison to be a masterpiece of literature, and would demonstrate Mr. Secretary Harlan to be merely a literary headsman. Out of many pages of allusion to the literary productions of the great writers of all time and for all time, some characteristic passages may be chosen:

"Here is Dante. Open the tremendous pages of the *Inferno*. What is this line at the end of the twenty-first canto, which even John Carlyle flinches from translating, but which Dante did not flinch from writing? Out with Dante!

"Here is the book of Job: the vast Arabian landscape, the picturesque pastoral details of Arabian life, the last tragic immensity of Oriental sorrow, the whole over-arching sky of Oriental piety, are here. But here also the inevitable 'indecentcy.' Out with Job!

"Here is Plutarch, prince of biographers, and Herodotus, flower of historians. What have we now? Traits of character not to be mentioned, incidents of conduct, accounts of manners, minute details of customs, which

our modern historical dandies would never venture upon recording. Out with Plutarch and Herodotus!

"Here is Shakespeare: 'indecent passages' everywhere; every drama, every poem thickly inlaid with them; all that men do displayed, sexual acts treated lightly, jested about, mentioned obscenely; the language never bolted; slang, gross puns, lewd words, in profusion. Out with Shakespeare!

"Here is the Canticle of Canticles: beautiful, voluptuous poem of love literally, whatever be its mystic significance; glowing with the color, odorous with the spices, melodious with the voices of the East; sacred and exquisite and pure with the burning chastity of passion, which completes and exceeds the snowy chastity of virgins. This to me, but what to the Secretary? Can he endure that the female form should stand thus in a poem, disrobed, unveiled, bathed in erotic splendor? Look at these voluptuous details, this expression of desire, this amorous tone and glow, this consecration and perfume lavished upon the sensual. No! Out with Solomon!

"Here is Isaiah. The grand thunder-roll of that righteousness, like the lion-roar of Jehovah above the guilty world, utters coarse words. Amidst the bolted lightnings of that sublime denunciation, coarse thoughts, indelicate figures, indecent allusions, flash upon the sight, like gross imagery in a midnight landscape. Out with Isaiah!

"Here is Montaigne. Open those great, those virtuous pages of the unflinching reporter of man; the soul all truth and daylight, all candor, probity, sincerity,

reality, eyesight. A few glances will suffice. Cant and vice and snifle have groaned over these pages before. Out with Montaigne!

"Here is Swedenborg. Open this poem of prose, the Conjugal Love, to me, a temple, though in ruins; the sacred fane, clothed in mist, filled with moonlight, of a great though broken mind. What spittle of critic epithets stains all here? 'Lewd,' 'sensual,' 'lecherous,' 'coarse,' 'licentious,' etc. Of course these judgments are final. There is no appeal from the tobacco-juice of an expectorating and disdainful virtue. Out with Swedenborg!

"Here is Goethe: the horrified squealing of prudes is not yet silent over pages of Wilhelm Meister: that high and chaste book, the Elective Affinities, still pumps up oaths from clergymen. Walpurgis has hardly ceased its uproar over Faust. Out with Goethe!

"Here is Cervantes: open Don Quixote, paragon of romances, highest result of Spain, best and sufficient reason for her life among the nations, a laughing novel which is a weeping poem. But talk such as this of Sancho Panza and Tummas Cecial under the cork trees, and these coarse stories and bawdy words, and this free and gross comedy—is it to be endured? Out with Cervantes!

"And here is Lord Bacon himself, in one of whose pages you may read, done from the Latin by Spedding into a magnificent golden thunder of English, the absolute defense of the free spirit of the great authors, coupled with stern rebuke to the spirit that would pick and choose, as dastard and effeminate. Out with Lord Bacon!

“Not him only, not these only, not only the writers are under the ban. Here is Phidias, gorgeous sculptor in gold and ivory, giant dreamer of the Infinite in marble; but he will not use the fig-leaf. Here is Rembrandt, who paints the Holland landscape, the Jew, the beggar, the burgher, in lights and glooms of Eternity; and his pictures have been called ‘indecent.’ Here is Mozart, his music rich with the sumptuous color of all sunsets; and it has been called ‘sensual.’ Here is Michael Angelo, who makes art tremble with a new and strange afflatus, and gives Europe novel and sublime forms that tower above the centuries, and accost the Greek; and his works have been called ‘bestial.’ Out with them all!”

In his summing up, stirred to wrath by the low tone of contemporary comment, O’Connor proceeded to expound the philosophy of literary ideals:

“The level of the great books is the Infinite, the Absolute. To contain all, by containing the premise, the truth, the idea and feeling of all, to tally the universe by profusion, variety, reality, mystery, enclosure, power, terror, beauty, service; to be great to the utmost conceivability of greatness—what higher level than this can literature spring to? Up on the highest summit stand such works, never to be surpassed, never to be supplanted. Their indecency is not that of the vulgar; their vulgarity is not that of the low. Their evil, if it be evil, is not there for nothing—it serves; at the base of it is Love. Every poet of the highest quality is, in the masterly coinage of the author of *Leaves of Grass*, a kosmos. His work, like himself, is a second world,

full of contrarieties, strangely harmonized, and moral indeed, but only as the world is moral. Shakespeare is all good, Rabelais is all good, Montaigne is all good, not because all the thoughts, the words, the manifestations are so, but because at the core, and permeating all, is an ethic intention—a love which, through mysterious, indirect, subtle, seemingly absurd, often terrible and repulsive, means, seeks to uplift, and never to degrade. It is the spirit in which authorship is pursued, as Augustus Schlegel has said, that makes it either an infamy or a virtue; and the spirit of the great authors, no matter what their letter, is one with that which pervades the Creation. In mighty love, with implements of pain and pleasure, of good and evil, Nature develops man; genius also, in mighty love, with implements of pain and pleasure, of good and evil, develops man; no matter what the means, that is the end.

“Tell me not, then, of the indecent passages of the great poets. The world, which is the poem of God, is full of indecent passages! ‘Shall there be evil in a city and the Lord hath not done it?’ shouts Amos. ‘I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil; I, the Lord, do all these things,’ thunders Isaiah. ‘This,’ says Coleridge, ‘is the deep abyss of the mystery of God.’ Ay, and the profound of the mystery of genius also! Evil is part of the economy of genius, as it is part of the economy of Deity. Gentle reviewers endeavor to find excuses for the freedoms of geniuses. ‘It is to prove that they were above conventionalities.’ ‘It is referable to the age.’ Oh, Ossa on Pelion, mount piled on mount, of error and folly! What has genius, spirit

of the absolute and the eternal, to do with the definitions of position, or conventionalities, or the age? Genius puts indecencies into its works, because God puts them into His world. Whatever the special reason in each case, this is the general reason in all cases. They are here, because they are there. That is the eternal why. No; Alphonso of Castile thought that, if he had been consulted at the Creation, he could have given a few hints to the Almighty. Not I. I play Alphonso neither to genius nor to God.

“What is this poem, for the giving of which to America and the world, and for that alone, its author has been dismissed with ignominy from a Government office? It is a poem which Schiller might have hailed as the noblest specimen of native literature, worthy of a place beside Homer. It is, in the first place, a work purely and entirely American, autochthonic, sprung from our own soil; no savor of Europe nor the past, nor of any other literature in it; a vast carol of our own land, and of its Present and Future; the strong and haughty psalm of the Republic. There is not one other book, I care not whose, of which this can be said. I weigh my words and have considered well. Every other book by an American author implies, both in form and substance, I cannot even say the European, but the British mind. The shadow of Temple Bar and Arthur’s Seat lies dark on all our letters. Intellectually we are still a dependency of Great Britain, and one word—colonial—comprehends and stamps our literature. In no literary form, except our newspapers, has there been anything distinctively American. I note our best books—



the works of Jefferson, the romances of Brockden Brown, the speeches of Webster, Everett's rhetoric, the divinity of Channing, some of Cooper's novels, the writings of Theodore Parker, the poetry of Bryant, the masterly law arguments of Lysander Spooner, the miscellanies of Margaret Fuller, the histories of Hildreth, Bancroft and Motley, Ticknor's History of Spanish Literature, Judd's Margaret, the political treatises of Calhoun, the rich, benignant poems of Longfellow, the ballads of Whittier, the delicate songs of Philip Pendleton Cooke, the weird poetry of Edgar Poe, the wizard tales of Hawthorne, Irving's Knickerbocker, Delia Bacon's splendid sibyllic book on Shakespeare, the political economy of Carey, the prison letters and immortal speech of John Brown, the lofty patrician eloquence of Wendell Phillips, and those diamonds of the first water, the great clear essays and greater poems of Emerson. This literature has often commanding merits, and much of it is very precious to me; but in respect to its national character, all that can be said is that it is tinged, more or less deeply, with America; and the foreign model, the foreign standards, the foreign ideas, dominate over it all.

“At most, our best books were but struggling beams; behold in *Leaves of Grass* the immense and absolute sunrise! It is all our own! The nation is in it! In form a series of chants, in substance it is an epic of America. It is distinctively and utterly American. Without model, without imitation, without reminiscence, it is evolved entirely from our own polity and popular life. Look at what it celebrates and contains!

hardly to be enumerated without sometimes using the powerful, wondrous phrases of its author, so indissoluble are they with the things described. The essences, the events, the objects of America; the myriad, varied landscapes; the teeming and giant cities; the generous and turbulent populations; the prairie solitudes, the vast pastoral plateaus; the Mississippi; the land dense with villages and farms; the habits, manners, customs; the enormous diversity of temperatures; the immense geography; the red aborigines passing away, 'charging the water and the land with names'; the early settlements; the sudden uprising and defiance of the Revolution; the august figure of Washington; the formation and sacredness of the Constitution; the pouring in of the emigrants; the million-masted harbors; the general opulence and comfort; the fisheries, and whaling, and gold-digging, and manufactures, and agriculture; the dazzling movement of new States, rushing to be great; Nevada rising, Dakota rising, Colorado rising; the tumultuous civilization around and beyond the Rocky Mountains, thundering and spreading; the Union impregnable; feudalism in all its forms forever tracked and assaulted; liberty deathless on these shores; the noble and free character of the people; the equality of male and female; the ardor, the fierceness, the friendship, the dignity, the enterprise, the affection, the courage, the love of music, the passion for personal freedom; the mercy and justice and compassion of the people; the popular faults and vices and crimes; the deference of the President to the private citizen; the image of Christ forever deepening in the public mind as the brother of

despised and rejected persons; the promise and wild song of the future; the vision of the Federal Mother, seated with more than antique majesty in the midst of her many children; the pouring glories of the hereafter; the vistas of splendor, incessant and branching, the tremendous elements, breeds, adjustments of America—with all these, with more, with everything transcendent, amazing and new, undimmed by the pale cast of thought, and with the very color and brawn of actual life, the whole gigantic epic of our continental being unwinds in all its magnificent reality in these pages. To understand Greece, study the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*; study *Leaves of Grass* to understand America. Her democracy is there. Would you have a text-book of democracy? The writings of Jefferson are good; De Tocqueville is better; but the great poet always contains historian and philosopher—and to know the comprehending spirit of this country, you shall question these insulted pages.”



#### IV

**I**T would be wearisome to refer in detail to the numerous estimates of *Leaves of Grass* which have found print since 1870. The increasing literature about Whitman bespeaks interest, and the kindly tenor of most commentators testifies to the enlarging appreciation of the Good Gray Poet. Within the past decade there have appeared seven biographies of him, all but one of them wholly and frankly lavish in his praise, and that one not unfriendly in criticism. Numerous book chapters have dealt with him in recognition of his genius, and only here and there have there been suggestions of earlier absolute condemnation. Among the biographers have been, in chronological sequence, Richard Maurice Bucke, John Burroughs, John Addington Symonds, Isaac Hull Platt, Geo. R. Carpenter, Bliss Perry, Henry Bryan Binns. Among the notable contributors of book chapters on Whitman may be mentioned from a list of two score or more, Robert Louis Stevenson, in his *Studies of Men and Books*; A. T. Quiller-Couch, in his *Adventures in Criticism*; Thomas Wentworth Higginson, in his *Contemporaries*; Havelock Ellis, in *The New Spirit*; Edward Dowden, in his *Studies in Literature*;

Edmund Gosse, in his *Critical Kit-Kats*; Hamilton Ma-bie, in his *Backgrounds of Literature*; Brander Matthews, in his *Aspects of Fiction*; Edmund Clarence Stedman, in his *Poets of America*; George Santayana, in *The Poetry of Barbarism*; and Algernon Charles Swinburne, in his *Studies in Prose and Poetry*. These have been mentioned specifically because they average the good and the bad rather than join in a chorus of indiscriminate praise. Indeed, the two last mentioned are distinctly hostile in tone. Swinburne, who in his earlier volume *Songs before Sunrise*, addressed a long poem, *To Walt Whitman in America*, fervent in praise,

“Send but a song oversea for us,  
Heart of their hearts who are free,  
Heart of their singer to be for us  
More than our singing can be,”

revoked all his former words of sympathetic admiration and in his later volume, printed in 1894, vehemently fell upon Whitman in this strain:

“There is no subject which may not be treated with success (I do not say there are no subjects which on other than artistic grounds it may not be as well to avoid, it may not be better to pass by) if the poet, by instinct or by training, knows exactly how to handle it aright, to present it without danger of just or rational offense. For evidence of this truth we need look no further than the pastorals of Virgil and Theocritus. But under the dirty clumsy paws of a harper whose plectrum

is a muck-rake any tune will become a chaos of discords, though the motive of the tune should be the first principle of nature—the passion of man for woman or the passion of woman for man. And the unhealthily demonstrative and obtrusive animalism of the Whitmaniad is as unnatural, as incompatible with the wholesome instincts of human passion, as even the filthy and inhuman asceticism of SS. Macarius and Simeon Stylites. If anything can justify the serious and deliberate display of merely physical emotion in literature or in art, it must be one of two things; intense depth of feeling expressed with inspired perfection of simplicity, with divine sublimity of fascination, as by Sappho; or transcendent supremacy of actual and irresistible beauty in such revelation of naked nature as was possible to Titian. But Mr. Whitman's Eve is a drunken apple-woman, indecently sprawling in the slush and garbage of the gutter amid the rotten refuse of her overturned fruit-stall: but Mr. Whitman's Venus is a Hottentot wench under the influence of cantharides and adulterated rum."

Weighing the good and the bad, Robert Louis Stevenson in his essay does not stint admiration nor withhold blame:

"He has chosen a rough, unrhymed, lyrical verse; sometimes instinct with a fine processional movement; often so rugged and careless that it can only be described by saying that he has not taken the trouble to write prose \* \* \* and one thing is certain, that no one can appreciate Whitman's excellences until he has grown accustomed to his faults."

Indicating the attitude of his partisans, John Burroughs' summing up is fairly representative:

"Just as ripe, mellowed, storied, ivy-towered, velvet-turfed England lies back of Tennyson, and is vocal through him; just as canny, covenanting, conscience-burdened, craggy, sharp-tongued Scotland lies back of Carlyle; just as thrifty, well-schooled, well-housed, prudent and moral New England lies back of her group of poets, and is voiced by them—so America as a whole, our turbulent democracy, our self-glorification, our faith in the future, our huge mass-movements, our continental spirit, our sprawling, sublime and unkempt nature lie back of Whitman, and are implied by his work."

It is not the purpose of this book to interpret Whitman either as a prophet or a poet, except inferentially as the words of his critics may carry distinct impressions. After all, the justest estimate of Whitman and his book is his own. Whitman's puzzling characteristics are best understood if we realize that *Leaves of Grass* is an autobiography—and an extraordinarily candid one—of a man whose peculiar temperament found expression in prose-verse. His gentleness, his brusqueness, his egotism, his humility, his grossness, his finer nature, his crudeness, his eloquence, are all here. To him they were the attributes of all mankind.

"I am of old and young, of the foolish as much as the wise;  
Regardless of others, ever regardful of others,  
Maternal as well as paternal, a child as well as a man,



Stuff'd with the stuff that is coarse, and stuff'd with the stuff that is fine."

In his virile young manhood he announced with gusto: "I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world."

In his serene old age he said: "Over the tree-tops I float thee a song."

And this was his conclusion: "I call to the world to distrust the accounts of my friends, but listen to my enemies as I myself do. I charge you forever reject those who would expound me, for I cannot expound myself."

Whoso challenges Whitman's gift of song may not at any rate deny to him the note of melody. This quality is strong in his titles particularly:

Rise O days from your fathomless deeps.

In cabin'd ships at sea.

Out of the cradle endlessly rocking.

Sands at seventy.

The sobbing of the bells.

Soon shall the winter's foil be here.

Thou mother with thy equal brood.

To the leaven'd soil they trod.

Yon tides with ceaseless swell.

When lilacs last in the dooryard bloomed.

Sparkles from the wheel.

Brother of all with generous hand.

As a strong bird on pinions free.

For a just estimate of Whitman, as for a clear comprehension of the symbolism contained in *Leaves of Grass*, a few blades of the latter will not suffice. It must be all, or none. The two poems here given should be taken, therefore, not as representative of the whole, but as types of two widely variant moods:

**O**F olden time, when it came to pass  
That the beautiful god, Jesus, should finish his  
work on earth,  
Then went Judas, and sold the divine youth,  
And took pay for his body.

Curst was the deed, even before the sweat of the clutch-  
ing hand grew dry;  
And darkness frown'd upon the seller of the like of God,  
Where, as though earth lifted her breast to throw him  
from her, and heaven refus'd him,  
He hung in the air, self-slaughter'd.

The cycles, with their long shadows, have stalked si-  
lently forward  
Since those days—many a pouch enwrapping meanwhile  
Its fee, like that paid for the son of Mary.

And still goes one, saying,  
“What will ye give me, and I will deliver this man unto  
you?”  
And they make the covenant, and pay the pieces of silver.

Look forth, deliverer,  
Look forth, first-born of the dead,  
Over the tree-tops of Paradise;  
See thyself in yet-continued bonds,  
Toilsome and poor, thou bear'st man's form again,  
Thou art reviled, scourged, put into prison,  
Hunted from the arrogant equality of the rest;  
With staves and swords throng the willing servants of  
    authority,  
Again they surround thee, mad with devilish spite;  
Toward thee stretch the hands of a multitude, like vul-  
    tures' talons,  
The nearest spit in thy face, they smite thee with their  
    palms;  
Bruised, bloody, and pinion'd is thy body,  
More sorrowful than death is thy soul.  
Witness of anguish, brother of slaves,  
Not with thy price closed the price of thine image:  
And still Iscariot plies his trade.

I  
**T**HE SOUL,  
Forever and forever—longer than soil is brown and  
    solid—longer than water ebbs and flows.

II  
Each is not for its own sake,  
I say the whole earth and all the stars in the sky are for  
    religion's sake.

### III

In this broad earth of ours,  
 Amid the measureless grossness and the slag,  
 Enclosed and safe within its central heart,  
 Nestles the seed perfection.  
 By every life a share or more or less,  
 None born but it is born, conceal'd or unconceal'd the  
 seed is waiting.

### IV

Do you not see O my brothers and sisters?  
 It is not chaos or death—it is form, union, plan—it is  
 eternal life—it is Happiness.

### V

The song is to the singer, and comes back most to him,  
 The love is to the lover, and comes back most to him—  
 it cannot fail.

### VI

I see Hermes, unsuspected, dying, well-beloved, saying  
 to the people *Do not weep for me,*  
*This is not my true country, I have lived banish'd from my*  
*true country, I now go back there,*  
*I return to the celestial sphere where every one goes in his*  
*turn.*

---

This is an attempt, incomplete but fairly represent-  
 ative as to sources, to trace the changing view during  
 half a century of Leaves of Grass and its author.

## V

**S**ONNETS and apostrophes in large number addressed to Walt Whitman during the later years of his life, and since his passing away, have appeared in fugitive form in widely separated sources. A selection of these may prove of interest by reason of the names attached, as well as because of the subject:

**T**HE good gray poet" gone! Brave hopeful Walt!  
 He might not be a singer without fault,  
 And his large rough-hewn rhythm did not chime  
 With dulcet daintiness of time and rhyme.  
 He was no neater than wide Nature's wild,  
 More metrical than sea winds. Culture's child,  
 Lapped in luxurious laws of line and lilt,  
 Shrank from him shuddering, who was roughly built  
 As cyclopean temples. Yet there rang  
 True music through his rhapsodies, as he sang  
 Of brotherhood, and freedom, love and hope, .  
 With strong, wide sympathy which dared to cope  
 With all life's phases, and call nought unclean.  
 Whilst hearts are generous, and whilst woods are green,  
 He shall find hearers, who in a slack time

Of puny bards and pessimistic rhyme,  
Dared to bid men adventure and rejoice.  
His "yawp barbaric" was a human voice;  
The singer was a man. America  
Is poorer by a stalwart soul today,  
And may feel pride that she hath given birth  
To this stout laureate of old Mother Earth.

—*Punch*

GOOD-BYE, WALT!

Good-bye from all you loved of Earth—  
Rock, tree, dumb creature, man and woman—  
To you their comrade human.

The last assault

Ends now, and now in some great world has birth  
A minstrel, whose strong soul finds broader wings,

More brave imaginings.

Stars crown the hill-top where your dust shall lie,

Even as we say good-bye,

Good-bye, old Walt!

—*Edmund Clarence Stedman*

**H**E was in love with truth and knew her near—  
Her comrade, not her suppliant on the knee:  
She gave him wild melodious words to be  
Made music that should haunt the atmosphere.  
She drew him to her bosom, day-long dear,  
And pointed to the stars and to the sea,  
And taught him miracles and mystery,  
And made him master of the rounded year.  
Yet one gift did she keep. He looked in vain,  
Brow-shaded, through the darkness of the mist,  
Marking a beauty like a wandering breath  
That beckoned, yet denied his soul a tryst:  
He sang a passion, yet he saw not plain  
Till kind earth held him and he spake with death.

—*Harrison S. Morris*



SOME find thee foul and rank and fetid, Walt,  
Who cannot tell Arabia from a sty.  
Thou followeth Truth, nor feareth, nor doth halt;  
Truth: and the sole uncleanness is a lie.

—*William Watson*

**P**RESAGE of strength yet to be, voice of the youngest  
of Time,  
Singer of the golden dawn,  
From thy great message must come light for the better-  
ing days,  
Joy to the hands that toil,  
Might to the hopes that droop,  
Power to the Nation reborn,  
Poet and master and seer, helper and friend unto men,  
Truth that shall pass into the life of us all!

—*Louis J. Block*

SEND but a song oversea for us,  
Heart of their hearts who are free,  
Heart of their singer to be for us  
More than our singing can be;  
Ours, in the tempest at error,  
With no light but the twilight of terror;  
Send us a song oversea!

Sweet-smelling of pine-leaves and grasses,  
And blown as a tree through and through  
With the winds of the keen mountain passes,  
And tender as sun-smitten dew;  
Sharp-tongued as the winter that shakes  
The wastes of your limitless lakes,  
Wide-eyed as the sea-line's blue.

O strong-winged soul with prophetic  
Lips hot with the bloodbeats of song,  
With tremor of heartstrings magnetic,  
With thoughts as thunders in throng,  
With consonant ardours of chords  
That pierce men's souls as with swords  
And hale them hearing along.

—*Algernon Swinburne*

SERENE, vast head, with silver cloud of hair,  
Lined on the purple dusk of death  
A stern medallion, velvet set—  
Old Norseman throned, not chained upon thy chair:  
Thy grasp of hand, thy hearty breath  
Of welcome thrills me yet  
As when I faced thee there.

Loving my plain as thou thy sea,  
Facing the east as thou the west,  
I bring a handful of grass to thee,  
The prairie grasses I know the best—  
Type of the wealth and width of the plain,  
Strong of the strength of the wind and sleet,  
Fragrant with sunlight and cool with rain—  
I bring it, and lay it low at thy feet,  
Here by the eastern sea.

—*Hamlin Garland*

I TOSS upon Thy grave,  
(After Thy life resumed, after the pause, the backward glance of Death;  
Hence, hence the vistas on, the march continued,  
In larger spheres, new lives in paths untrodden,  
On! till the circle rounded, ever the journey on!)  
Upon Thy grave,—the vital sod how thrilled as from  
Thy limbs and breast transpired,  
Rises the spring's sweet utterance of flowers,—  
I toss this sheaf of song, these scattered leaves of love!  
For thee, Thy Soul and Body spent for me,  
—And now still living, now in love, transmitting still  
Thy Soul, Thy Flesh to me, to all!—  
These variant phrases of the long-immortal chant  
I toss upon Thy grave!

—George Cabot Lodge

I AM no slender singing bird  
That feeds on puny garden seed!  
My songs are stronger than those heard  
In ev'ry wind-full, shallow reed!  
My pipes are jungle-grown and need  
A strong man's breath to blow them well;  
A strong soul's sense to solve their spell  
And be by their deep music stirred.

My voice speaks not, in lispings notes,  
The madrigals of lesser minds!  
My heart tones thunder from the throats  
Of throbbing seas and raging winds;  
And yet, the master-spirit finds  
The tenderness of mother earth  
Is there expressed, despite the dearth  
Of tinkle tunes like dancing motes!

My hand strokes not a golden lyre  
Threaded with silver—spider spun!  
The strings I strike are strands of fire,  
Strung from Earth's center to the Sun!  
Thrilled with passion, ev'ry one!  
With songs of forest, corn, and vine;  
Of rushing water, blood, and wine;  
Of man's conception and desire!

But listen, comrade! This I say:  
In all of all I give my heart!  
With lover's voice I bid you stay  
To share with me the better part  
Of all my days! nights! thoughts! and start  
With far-spread arms to welcome you,  
And we will shout a song so true  
That it shall ring for aye and aye.  
—*Ray Clarke Rose*

YOUR lonely muse, unraimented with rhyme,  
Her hair unfilleted, her feet unshod,  
Naked and not ashamed demands of God  
No covering for her beauty's youth or prime.  
Clad but with thought, as space is clad with time,  
Or both with worlds where man and angels plod,  
She runs in joy, magnificently odd,  
Ruggedly wreathed with flowers of every clime.  
And you to whom her breath is sweeter far  
Than choicest attar of the martyred rose  
More deeply feel mortality's unrest  
Than poets born beneath a happier star,  
Because the pathos of your grand repose  
Shows that all earth has throbbed within your breast.

—*Albert Edmund Lancaster*



THEY say that thou art sick, art growing old,  
Thou Poet of unconquerable health,  
With youth far-stretching, through the golden wealth  
Of autumn, to Death's frostful, friendly cold;  
The never-blenching eyes, that did behold  
Life's fair and foul, with measureless content,  
And gaze ne'er sated, saddened as they bent  
Over the dying soldier in the fold  
Of thy large comrade love:—then broke the tear!  
War-dream, field-vigil, the bequeath'd kiss,  
Have brought old age to thee; yet, Master, now,  
Cease not thy song to us; lest we should miss  
A death-chant of indomitable cheer,  
Blown as a gale from God;—Oh, sing it thou!

—*Aaron Leigh*

O PURE heart singer of the human frame  
Divine, whose poesy disdains control  
Of slavish bonds! each poem is a soul,  
Incarnate born of thee, and given thy name.  
Thy genius is unshackled as a flame  
That sunward soars, the central light its goal;  
Thy thoughts are lightnings, and thy numbers roll  
In Nature's thunders that put art to shame.  
Exalter of the land that gave thee birth,  
Though she insult thy grand gray years with wrong  
Of infamy, foul-branding thee with scars  
Of felon-hate, still shalt thou be on earth  
Revered, and in Fame's firmament of song  
Thy name shall blaze among the eternal stars!

—*Leonard Wheeler*

O TITAN soul, ascend your starry steep,  
On golden stair, to gods and storied men!  
Ascend! nor care where thy traducers creep.

For what may well be said of prophets, when  
A world that's wicked comes to call them good?  
Ascend and sing! As kings of thought who stood

On stormy heights, and held far lights to men,  
Stand thou, and shout above the tumbled roar,  
Lest brave ships drive and break against the shore.  
What though thy sounding song be roughly set?

Parnassus' self is rough! Give thou the thought,  
The golden ore, the gems that few forget;

In time the tinsel jewel will be wrought.  
Stand thou alone, and fixed as destiny,

An imaged god that lifts above all hate;  
Stand thou serene and satisfied with fate;  
Stand thou as stands the lightning-riven tree,  
That lords the cloven clouds of gray Yosemite.

Yea, lone, sad soul, thy heights must be thy home;

Thou sweetest lover! love shall climb to thee  
Like incense curling some cathedral dome,

From many distant vales. Yet thou shalt be,  
O grand, sweet singer, to the end alone.

But murmur not. The moon, the mighty spheres,  
Spin on alone through all the soundless years;  
Alone man comes on earth; he lives alone;  
Alone he turns to front the dark unknown.

—*Joaquin Miller*

I KNEW there was an old, white-bearded seer  
Who dwelt among the streets of Camden town;  
I had the volumes which his hand wrote down—  
The living evidence we love to hear  
Of one who walks reproachless, without fear.  
But when I saw that face, capped with its crown  
Of snow-white almond-buds, his high renown  
Faded to naught, and only did appear  
The calm old man, to whom his verses tell,  
All sounds were music, even as a child;  
And then the sudden knowledge on me fell,  
For all the hours his fancies had beguiled,  
No verse had shown the Poet half so well  
As when he looked into my face and smiled.

—*Linn Porter*

FRIEND WHITMAN! wert thou less serene and  
kind,  
Surely thou mightest (like the bard sublime),  
Scorned by a generation deaf and blind,  
Make thine appeal to the avenger TIME;  
For thou art none of those who upward climb,  
Gathering roses with a vacant mind.  
Ne'er have thy hands for jaded triflers twined  
Sick flowers of rhetoric and weeds of rhyme.  
Nay, thine hath been a Prophet's stormier fate.  
While LINCOLN and the martyr'd legions wait  
In the yet widening blue of yonder sky,  
On the great strand below them thou art seen,  
Blessing, with something Christ-like in thy mien,  
A sea of turbulent lives, that break and die.

—*Robert Buchanan*

**D**ARKNESS and death? Nay, Pioneer, for thee  
The day of deeper vision has begun;  
There is no darkness for the central sun  
Nor any death for immortality.  
At last the song of all fair songs that be,  
At last the guerdon of a race well run,  
The upswelling joy to know the victory won,  
The river's rapture when it finds the sea.  
Ah, thou art wrought in an heroic mould,  
The Modern Man upon whose brow yet stays  
A gleam of glory from the age of gold—  
A diadem which all the gods have kissed.  
Hail and farewell! Flower of the antique days,  
Democracy's divine protagonist.

—*Francis Howard Williams*

**T**RANQUIL as stars that unafraid  
Pursue their way through space,  
Vital as light, unhoused as wind,  
Unloosed from time and place;

Solemn as birth, and sane as death,  
Thy bardic chantings move;  
Rugged as earth, and salt as sea,  
And bitter-sweet as love.

—*May Morgan*

ONE master poet royally her own,  
Begot of Freedom, bore our Western World:  
A poet, native as the dew impearl'd  
Upon her grass; a brother, thew and bone,  
To mountains wild, vast lakes and prairies lone;  
One, life and soul, akin to speech unfurl'd,  
And zeal of artisan, and song not curl'd  
In fronded forms, or petrified in tone.  
High latitudes of thought gave breath to him;  
The paps he suck'd ran not false shame for milk;  
No bastard he! but virile truth in limb  
And soul. A Titan mocking at the silk  
That bound the wings of song. A tongue of flame,  
Whose ashes gender an immortal name.

—*Joseph W. Chapman*



THOU lover of the cosmos vague and vast,  
In which thy virile mind would penetrate  
Unto the rushing, primal springs of fate,  
Ruling alike the future, present, past:  
Now, having breasted waves beyond death's blast,  
New Neptune's steeds saluted, white and great,  
And entered through the glorious Golden Gate.  
And gained the fair celestial shores at last,  
Still worship'st thou the Ocean? thou that tried  
To comprehend its mental roar and surge,  
Its howling as of victory and its dirge  
For continents submerged by shock and tide.  
By that immortal ocean now what cheer?  
Do crews patrol and save the same as here?

—*Edward S. Creamer*

ALL hail to thee! WALT WHITMAN! Poet, Prophet, Priest!

Celebrant of Democracy! At more than regal feast  
To thee we offer homage, and with our greenest bay  
We crown thee Poet Laureate on this thy natal day.  
We offer choice ascription—our loyal tribute bring,  
In this the new Olympiad in which thou reignest king.  
POET of the present age, and of æons yet to be,  
In this the chosen homestead of those who would be  
free—

Free from feudal usage, from courtly sham and cant;  
Free from kingcraft, priestcraft, with all their rot and  
rant!

PROPHET of a race redeemed from all conventual  
thrall,

Espouser of equal sexship in body, soul, and all!

PRIEST of a ransom'd people, endued with clearer  
light;

A newer dispensation for those of psychic sight.

We greet thee as our mentor, we meet thee as our friend,  
And to thy ministrations devotedly we lend

The aid that comes from fealty which thou hast made  
so strong,

Thro' touch of palm, and glint of eye, and spirit of thy  
song.

We magnify thy mission, we glorify thy aim,

Unflinching adhered to through ill-report and blame—

The fretting of the groundlings, the fumings of the pit,  
The jibes and jeers and snarls and sneers which men  
mistake for wit.

We knew the rising splendor of thy sun could never  
wane

Until, the earth encompass'd, it sank in dazzling flame.  
In faith assured we waited as in patience thou didst  
wait,

Knowing full well the answer must sooner come or late.  
And come it has, sufficingly, the discord disappears  
Until today again is heard the music of the spheres  
Proclaiming thee the well-beloved, peer of the proudest  
peers.

—*Henry L. Bonsall*

HE fell asleep when in the century's skies  
The paling stars proclaimed another day—  
He, genial still, amidst the chill and gray,  
With smiling lips and trustful, dauntless eyes;  
He, the Columbus of a vast emprise,  
Whose realization in the future lay;  
He, who stepped from the well-worn, narrow way  
To walk with Poetry in larger guise.  
And fortunate, despite of transient griefs,  
The years announce him in a new born age;  
The ship of his fair fame, past crags and reefs,  
Sails bravely on, and less and less the rage  
Of gainsaying winds becomes; while to his phrase  
The world each day gives ampler heed and praise!  
—*William Struthers*

HERE health we pledge you in one draught of song,  
Caught in this rhymster's cup from earth's delight,  
Where English fields are green the whole year long—  
The wine of might,  
That the new-come spring distills, most sweet and  
strong,  
In the viewless air's alembic, that's wrought too fine for  
sight.  
Good health! we pledge, that care may lightly sleep,  
And pain of age be gone for this one day,  
As of this loving cup you take, and, drinking deep,  
Are glad at heart straightway  
To feel once more the friendly heat of the sun  
Creative in you (as when in youth it shone),  
And pulsing brainward with the rhythmic wealth  
Of all the summer whose high minstrelsy  
Shall soon crown field and tree,  
To call back age to youth again, and pain to perfect  
health.

—*Ernest Rhys*

I LOAF and invite my soul  
And what do I feel?

An influx of life from the great central power  
That generates beauty from seedling to flower.

I loaf and invite my soul  
And what do I hear?

Original harmonies piercing the din  
Of measureless tragedy, sorrow and sin.

I loaf and invite my soul  
And what do I see?

The temple of God in the perfected man,  
Revealing the wisdom and end of earth's plan.

—*Elizabeth Porter Gould*

HE passed amid the noisy throngs,  
His elbow touched with theirs;  
They grumbled at their petty wrongs,  
Their woes and cares;

They asked if "Princeton stood to win";  
Or what they should invest;  
They told with gusto and with grin  
Some futile jest.

They jostled him and passed him by,  
Nor slacked their eager pace;  
They did not mark that noble eye,  
That noble face.

So carelessly they let him go,  
His mien they could not scan,—  
Thinker whom all the world would know,  
Our greatest man.

*Max J. Herzberg*

**H**ERE ends this book written by Henry Eduard Legler, arranged in this form by Laurence C. Woodworth, Scrivener, and printed for the Brothers of the Book at the press of The Faithorn Company, Chicago, 1916.



*Incipit Vita Nova*









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